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20-term Democratic Rep. Henry Waxman to retire

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Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., a pillar of the House Democratic caucus who played a key role in devising legislation on health care, environmental protection, and consumer protection during almost four decades on Capitol Hill, **announced his decision to retire** at the end of the current Congress on Thursday.

"In 1974, I announced my first campaign for Congress," Waxman said in a statement. "Today, I am announcing that I have run my last campaign. I will not seek reelection to the Congress and will leave after 40 years in office at the end of this year."

He thanked his constituents for their longtime support and his "brilliant and committed" staff for their work. He also said he was "honored" to serve under House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., a close ally of his and the first female Speaker of the House.

Throughout his long tenure in Congress, Waxman built a reputation as a savvy legislator and deal-maker, leaving his fingerprints on numerous landmark pieces of legislation.

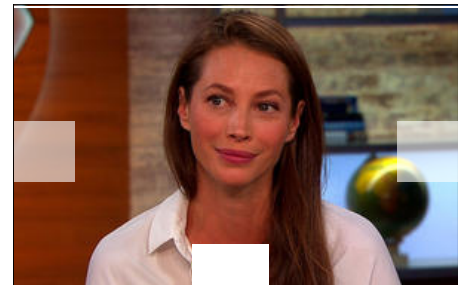
More recently, he played a key role in the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010. He was also instrumental in the push during President Obama's first term for **cap-and-trade legislation** to curb U.S. carbon emissions and combat climate change. Along with then-Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., he shepherded a bill through the House of Representatives in 2009, but that proposal died in the Senate.

Waxman also waged a long effort to strengthen the regulatory and oversight powers of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration.



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His activist approach to regulatory policy made him as dreaded by the right wing as he was revered by the left. In 2008, Waxman defeated Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., in a battle for the chairmanship of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. His victory over Dingell, a midwestern congressman with deep ties to manufacturing and the automobile industry, presaged a more aggressive Democratic push for environmental protection that culminated in the passage of the Waxman-Markey cap-and-trade bill.

Earlier in his tenure, Waxman carved a high-profile path as the chairman of the House Oversight Committee during the final two years of former President George W. Bush's administration, dogging the White House with probes into the Iraq War, the politicization of the Justice Department, global warming, and other concerns.

After Democrats seized control of Congress in the 2006 midterms, Waxman put Mr. Bush's White House on notice.

"We have to let people know they have someone watching them after six years with no oversight at all," said Waxman, [according to The Washington Post](#). "And we've got a lot of low-hanging fruit to pick."



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He gained fame outside of the political world during his chairmanship when he presided over high-profile hearings in 2005 (as ranking Democrat) and 2008 (as committee chairman) on steroid use in Major League Baseball, dragging the likes of Mark McGwire, Roger Clemens and other players before his committee. Clemens, who had been accused of using steroids but vehemently denied it, was later indicted – and eventually found not guilty – on six counts of lying to Congress during his February 2008 testimony.

During an stint atop the Oversight Committee in the 1990s, Waxman also led an investigation of tobacco companies that was remembered for forcing seven Big Tobacco executives to testify before Congress on the health risks posed by smoking.

In announcing his retirement, Waxman joins a string of Capitol Hill veterans who have decided to head for the exit after the current Congress is finished. Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., another Democratic policy heavyweight and close Pelosi ally, recently announced he would step down in 2015. And Reps. Tom Latham, R-Iowa, and Buck McKeon, R-Calif., also recently said they would retire.

In an [interview with Politico](#) published Thursday, Waxman insisted his retirement should not reflect poorly on Democrats' chances of retaking the House in the 2014 midterm elections.

"I don't accept the idea that Democrats won't get the House back," he said. "I think that the Republicans have nothing to offer. They're against everything. They're against everything Obama wanted. They have no alternatives on health care policy. They have nothing to say, they have nothing to offer."

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